

PRESS RELEASE

Massachusetts Awarded \$1.8 Million Federal Preschool Development Grant

Award focuses on improving outcomes for young children and building stronger connections across programs

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Executive Office of Education

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Department of Early Education and Care

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BOSTON — Today the Baker-Polito Administration announced that Massachusetts received \$1.8 million from the federal Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Child Care for a [Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/pdg-b-5-initiative) (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/pdg-b-5-initiative>) grant that will help more parents and educators support children's development, better screen infants and toddlers for developmental delays, improve referrals to services, and expand access to training for early educators.

“Working across state agencies, this grant will enable us to strengthen existing programs, provide enhanced training for early educators and improve access to referrals and services for young children and their families,” **Governor Charlie Baker said.** “We look forward to increasing the number of children entering kindergarten ready to succeed with the help of this grant and the work it supports.”

The new grant is the first of its kind to be administered jointly across the two state Secretariats and four agencies that are responsible for managing state programs and services for infants and toddlers and their families. The grant was awarded to the Executive Office of Education, but will be managed jointly with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Department of Early Education and Care, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department of Public Health, and the Children’s Trust. All six agencies will work together to review current services, identify gaps and needs, and streamline existing programming, funding, regulations and outreach to families and educators working with infants and toddlers. Through this collaboration, the agencies will coordinate to develop a statewide plan for improving the outcomes of young children, particularly for low-income families.

“We are pleased this support will significantly improve how we work with families and educators to improve outcomes for infants, toddlers and preschoolers across the Commonwealth,” **Lt. Governor Karyn Polito said.**

“Early intervention is a key intervention that can change a child’s trajectory and support their family,” **said Executive Office of Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders.** “This funding will allow us to identify and engage with families earlier, address the persistent inequitable access to early childhood opportunities faced by low-income families, and create a better system of care for children and their families.”

“Early childhood screening is a critical part of almost every program serving infants and toddlers, including early education, early intervention, Head Start, pediatric well visits, and home visiting. It’s the first point of information that we have to help understand child development milestones. This grant will help us expand and improve our screening efforts, so more families will have the information they need to understand their children’s growth and development,” **Education Secretary James Peyser said.**

“This award will help Massachusetts advance its ‘Birth to Five’ early childhood system by providing support for coordinated strategic planning activities that promote children’s healthy development in the critical years before kindergarten,” **said Board of Early Education and Care Chair Nonie Lesaux.** “Collaborating with state and community partners to develop a needs-based action plan that focuses on information sharing, access to developmental screening tools, and improving communication with families, will help increase the quality of our state’s early education and care system.”

“Through this grant we will build additional partnerships, better align our early childhood systems, and make further enhancements to our resources for families in support of the healthy growth and development of the Commonwealth’s youngest children,” **Early Education and Care Commissioner Tom Weber said.**

The *Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five* program builds on two Massachusetts efforts over the last four years to improve services to vulnerable children and families by connecting funding, data and services across state and local agencies. First, the Early Literacy Expert Panel, co-chaired by Nonie Lesaux and Executive Office of Education Undersecretary Ann Reale, recommended using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, a developmental screener, more uniformly across state agencies to identify children with developmental delays earlier and ensure they receive referrals to stay on track toward third grade reading milestones. Second, in 2015 Massachusetts received a Preschool Expansion Grant that supports public/private partnerships to deliver high-quality preschool to four-year-old children from low-income families. Five cities across the Commonwealth have provided additional preschool opportunities to children through collaborations between the public school district and community early education and care programs: Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, and Springfield.

Massachusetts’ *Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five* grant application is posted on the [Department of Early Education and Care website](https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-preschool-development-grant-birth-five-application) ([/doc/massachusetts-preschool-development-grant-birth-five-application](https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-preschool-development-grant-birth-five-application)).

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